



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Office of International Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20201

APR 15 2004

Office of the  
Director-General  
205-211  
21 APR 2004

Denis G. Aitken  
Assistant Director-General  
and Director of the Office of the Director-General  
World Health Organization  
Avenue Appia 20  
1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland

cc David Mohr  
LEG.

Dear Mr. Aitken: *Denis*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is pleased to make its experts available to the World Health Organization (WHO) to serve as technical consultants or temporary advisors. However, the current practice in which the WHO invites specific HHS officials by name to serve in these capacities has not always resulted in the most appropriate selections. While the Office of the Secretary often receives copies of these invitations, this does not provide sufficient time for us to review each proposed selection to ensure HHS can provide the best possible expert from among our 65,000 employees.

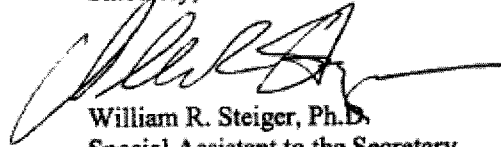
Consequently, and effective immediately, we request the WHO to provide us with the terms of reference and other relevant information for each consultation to which HHS experts can make a contribution. If the WHO has a specific expert to suggest, we will be pleased to consider that recommendation. In consultation with relevant HHS Operating Divisions and Staff Divisions, the Office of Global Health Affairs (OGHA) will then identify an appropriate expert who can best serve both of our organizations. To comply with internal approval processes required by these regulations, we will require a minimum lead-time of three weeks. Please continue to copy David Hohman, our Health Attaché at the U.S. Mission in Geneva, on all invitations to facilitate this coordination.

Further, please remember that, except under very limited circumstances, U.S. Government experts do not and cannot participate in WHO consultations in their individual capacity. U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and U.S. Civil Service regulations require HHS experts to serve as representatives of the U.S. Government at all times and advocate U.S. Government policies. While this has not necessarily inhibited HHS experts from participation in the past, we want to ensure the WHO is fully cognizant of the terms under which HHS experts can participate in the work of the Organization.

Page 2- Denis G. Aitken

Please call Lou Valdez, the Deputy Director for Policy in OGHA, or me (202/690-6174) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Steiger', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William R. Steiger, Ph.D.  
Special Assistant to the Secretary  
for International Affairs

Copy to: The Honorable Kevin Moley